


Officials mark grand opening of Auburn Heights Trail


YORKLYN (Aug. 20, 2012) – Governor Jack Markell and DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara were joined today by local legislators and the Friends of the Auburn Heights Preserve at the grand opening of the first phase of the new Auburn Heights Trail, where they invited walkers and bicyclists to be the first to walk or bike on the newly finished trail. It is among the first trails to have been funded, designed and constructed as part of the Governor's Trails and Pathways Initiative, launched last October. 

"This is the first of many new trails for public enjoyment under our Trails and Pathways Initiative," said Gov. Markell. "Delawareans and visitors will find in Yorklyn a great new place to hike and bike. It's good for the local economy and provides jobs in the area by helping revitalize this community."

DNREC's Division of Parks and Recreation hosted the grand opening of the trail, which is part of a major, multi-phase project designed to transform the town of Yorklyn into a vibrant, lively and scenic centerpiece while still retaining its mill town roots. A public-private partnership was established in 2009 to map out the future of the town. The highlight of the redevelopment is a six-mile loop trail that will eventually connect the communities of Yorklyn, Hockessin, Wilmington and Kennett Square. Today's event, opening the one-mile loop trail, marked the completion of the first phase of that trail system.

"With the beautiful, historic setting of Yorklyn as a backdrop, we believe the synergy between this outstanding loop trail and the planned trails and parks spaces will make this a uniquely Delaware destination," said DNREC Sec. O'Mara.

“Ultimately, this trail will connect new amenities with historic and natural areas, in addition to connecting to existing attractions like the Marshall Steam Museum, the Wilmington and Western Railroad, the Center for Creative Arts, and the Delaware Nature Society, expanding our tourism-drawing development.”

Under his Trails and Pathways Initiative, Gov. Markell has charged DNREC and DelDOT with creating an interconnected network of shared-use trails and pathways for alternative travel and recreational purposes. The focus is on bicycling and walking – providing safe and convenient ways to reach businesses, schools, parks and transit. The General Assembly has afforded these agencies significant funds over the last two budget cycles that are directed to projects that begin to fulfill portions of the Trails and Pathways Initiative. 

“The Auburn Heights Trail will provide a safe and scenic greenway in the historic and beautiful Red Clay Valley,” said State Senator Liane Sorenson (R-Hockessin), whose legislative district includes the Auburn Heights Trail. “This trail will be enjoyed by Yorklyn residents and visitors alike. Especially for children, trails and pathways help lead to healthier lifestyles. Children who ride bikes regularly are less likely to become obese, according to research. It’s also healthier for adults, leading to better weight and blood pressure. So not only is this new trail a great addition to our Trails and Pathways Initiative, it offers a healthy choice for children and adults. ”

“I am thrilled for the grand opening of this trail, realizing that this is one more important piece of this comprehensive revitalization project for this area,” said State Representative Deborah Hudson (R-Fairthorne), whose legislative district is home to the new pathway. “Without a doubt, the families of this area will also be excited to see more of the project completed. This is a dream come true and I am proud of the state’s role in helping to preserve this

beautiful open space through Bond Bill funding. It's a public-private partnership that continues to work well and benefit the citizens of the surrounding communities."

One of the unique features of the upcoming six-mile loop trail is that it will also be available for use by certain vintage automobiles, providing the drivers and other park visitors with an authentic 1920s mill town experience. The project is expected to boost economic development in the scenic area, and add to state parkland at the Auburn Heights Preserve located in the Red Clay Valley near the Pennsylvania state line.

☒ "Tom and Ruth Marshall donated Auburn Heights to the Division of Parks and Recreation in November 2008," said Steve Bryce, board president of the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve. "It has been gratifying to the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve to see the property become the focal point for the redevelopment of the Yorklyn area. We are pleased that less than four years after the start of our formal relationship with Delaware State Parks, we have an admirable master plan for Auburn Heights and the adjacent NVF lands and that today, we can celebrate the completion of the first step in that plan."

The Auburn Heights Preserve, part of the Delaware State Parks system, is home to the historic Marshall estate, which is managed through a partnership between Delaware State Parks and the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve. The Friends group owns a world-class collection of operating vintage steam cars, including 14 Stanley Steamers and the miniature Auburn Valley Railroad.